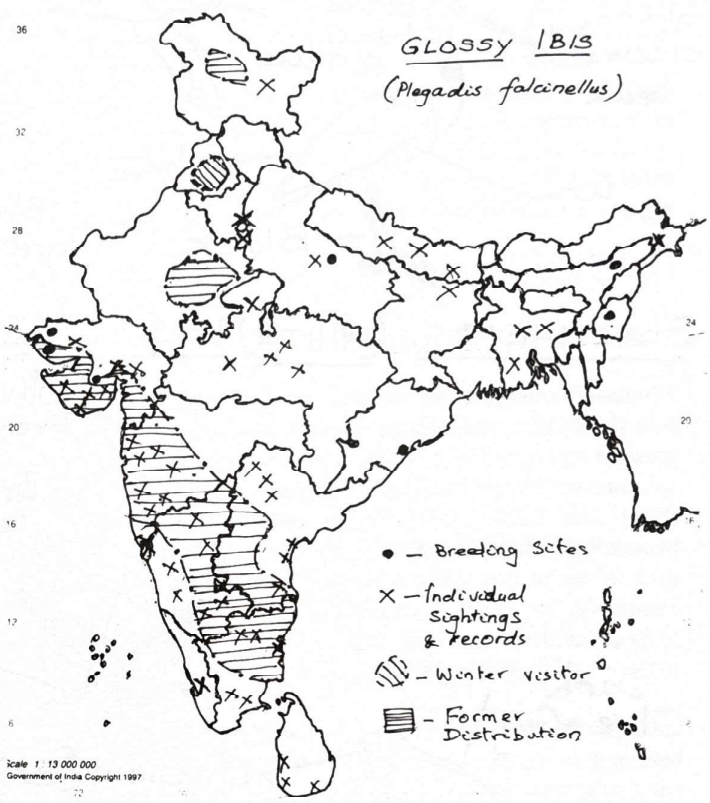
SPOTLIGHT: Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* By Siraj A. Taher

This column focuses on birds that are in the Red Data Book of BirdLife International as threatened / highly threatened species. Readers are requested to send information about these birds to the Society.

This is the smallest of the 3 ibises found in India. If you happen to notice it during the breeding season, it will be seen as a dark bird with a slender, down curved, olive-brown bill and greenish brown legs. The head, neck and upper body will be deep chestnut, glossed with purple and green and the wings will have a glistening green in them. Lower body is plain chestnut. Non-breeding birds have their dark brown head and neck streaked with white, the upper back is glossed with purple and green and the under parts are a light chestnut. In flight the neck and legs are extended. Males and females look alike. Normally silent, it has, during the breeding season, a nasal screaming or a guttural croak uttered in flight.

The Glossy Ibis is a gregarious bird, sometimes seen in groups of up to 40. They feed along the edges of water in large jheels, riverbanks, freshwater marshes and in flooded grasslands and rice paddies. Food consists mainly of crustaceans, molluscs, insects, small fishes, tadpoles and small frogs. Although feeding on the ground, they roost and nest on trees in mixed heronries. The nest, built during May and June, is a platform of sticks on trees at the edges of water, in which 2-3 blue-green eggs are laid. Both parents share incubating duties, which last for 21 days.

It is partly resident and nomadic and partly a winter migrant, moving erratically depending upon the availability of food and water conditions. In India, Glossy Ibis can be found in Gujarat and Kutch, Rajasthan, throughout the Gangetic Plains, Assam, Manipur, West Bengal, Orissa and south to peninsular India, Deccan region and Karnataka. In Andhra Pradesh it has been reported from Adilabad, Nizamabad and Srikakulam Districts. Also at Pocharam in Medak District. It is found in Nepal, but is rare in Sri Lanka and Maldives. Outside India, it is found in western Pakistan, Afghanistan, Turkey, Burma, Philippines and Indonesia. There are two races—the nominate race occurs from Eastern Europe through west, central and south Asia. Breeding populations from north Caspian winter in southwest and south Asia and mix with the resident population. Some birds migrate to southwest Asia and northeast Africa. The second race *P. f. peregrinus* breeds in Indonesia, Philippines and Australia. There is insufficient data on these birds but from what is available, it suggests that the numbers are declining in India.



BIRD-*WORD*: A BIRDWATCHER'S LEXICON Compiled by S. Ashok Kumar

BIRD SONG Bird song is the prolonged and complicated sounds made by a bird during breeding season which is different from the calls they make throughout the year.

BOTULISM The poisoning caused by a toxin produced by the bacillus *Clostridium botulinum* growing in poorly preserved food. [Vultures are immune to botulism and can consume enough botulism organisms to kill 3,00,000 guinea pigs. *Ripley's* Believe it or not.]

BREEDING Breeding is production of offspring.

BROOD PARASITISM It is parasitizing the nest of host bird. The obligate brood parasites depend on the host for incubating their eggs and rearing the nestlings. It is also called Nest parasitism

BROOD PATCH Brood patch is a featherless area on the ventral surface of the body of the incubating bird containing anastomosis blood vessels. The heat of the body is transferred to the eggs through the brood patch. Incubating birds develop an incubation patch or brood patch during the breeding season.

BUFFER ZONE The peripheral zone of a protected area, which serves to protect and insulate the nature reserves, is termed as buffer zone.

CALL-NOTES Call-notes are the indistinct sounds made by birds outside breeding season such as contact notes, alarm calls, *etc*. Birds throughout the year use notes and calls.

CALAMUS It is the lower hollow tubular part of scapus or the stem of a feather. Also called quill.

CARINA Carina is the ventral broad plate of the chest bone (sternum) to which the powerful flight muscles are attached, also called Keel.